

*National Housing Act*

number of new homes on either side of the Queensway as we took off for Toronto. I was very pleased to hear the remarks of this visitor to our country, and I am sure that all Members of the House will welcome this compliment to the performance of the officials of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation of Canada.

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I would like to express appreciation to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in his capacity as the Minister responsible for the National Housing Act, for the amendments to the act that he brought into being in the last session, and for the five efficacious and far-sighted amendments proposed in broad outline by this resolution.

His enthusiasm and initiative in setting up symposia and personally attending each symposium in eight of the ten provinces of Canada, with the responses that have resulted from them, I would submit are in large measure responsible for the necessity for the Government resolution we have before us today to increase the limits in all five categories of the resolution.

I attended the symposium held in Toronto on December 17 last. It was held, I believe, for the southern and southwestern parts of the Province of Ontario. The ballroom of the King Edward Hotel was crowded with over 600 provincial and municipal representatives, and I am sure many of them had little or no idea, at the beginning, of the full range of benefits that could be obtained under the National Housing Act.

The provinces and the municipalities are, however, jealously the masters in their own jurisdictions as to what they will plan in the way of building and where they will locate it, whether it be new building or clearance, or the rehabilitation of existing housing, industrial or commercial areas.

The Minister spoke to the gathering on that occasion with great clarity and he was careful to point out that the Federal Government was not attempting in any way to dictate to the provinces or municipalities as to either when or where they should initiate their plans and their construction. Rather, he expressly pointed out that initiation of any scheme under the Act was the responsibility primarily of the municipality. Under our constitution, separating as it does areas of sovereignty, the Federal Government could only hold out the carrot and hope that it would be taken.

As an illustration let me quote from the Minister's speech on that occasion:

[Mr. Ryan.]

We know what must be done—we must master our municipal destinies.

This then is the program I submit to you. It is a program of grants and assistance specifically tailored to meet varied urban requirements. It was prepared as a direct result of consultations with every province by my late colleague, Hon. John R. Garland, just prior to his untimely death. Because of the provincial co-operation, new and timely legislation has become reality. I cannot speak too highly of the co-operation that we are receiving from the government of this province in this program.

But let no man be mistaken—the whole act of revitalization of our communities must spring from local initiative. Housing and urban renewal are the particular prerogatives of the provinces and the municipalities themselves—not the Federal Government. The challenge—the ultimate responsibility is entirely local.

I should like now, Mr. Chairman, to refer briefly to the observations of the hon. Member for Timmins at pages 666 and 669 of *Hansard*, and to say how admirably his words reflect his own state of confusion when it comes to a discussion of housing. I suggest his speech could have been conceived only in the atmosphere of "foggy thinking," of which he unjustly accused the Minister.

Armed with clippings from the *Globe and Mail*, the hon. Member claimed that the Minister had been guilty of contradictory statements. On the one hand, he is quoted as saying nearly 100,000 Canadian families live in appalling housing conditions; on the other—the next day—he is reported as being opposed to N.H.A. loans for existing housing and as stating that the latter is a function of the private part of the economy.

● (4:40 p.m.)

What the hon. Member apparently fails to appreciate is that these comments were about two entirely different things. Loans for existing housing are now and always have been a function of private enterprise; the National Housing Act has concerned itself with encouraging an increase in the volume and quality of new housing. But the improvement of properties in designated urban renewal areas is another matter. In this field mortgage loans, either made or insured by Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, are being utilized under the amended statute as the third prong of a three-pronged attack on urban blight, that is, redevelopment, rehabilitation and conservation. I feel sure it was in this connection that the Minister referred to provincial responsibility and involvement. As he has said many times, last summer's amendments to the Act were discussed with and accepted by all provincial governments and, while they were enthusiastic about N.H.A.